



**Minnesota  
Judicial Branch**

# **DRUG COURT STANDARDS**

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**MINNESOTA DRUG COURT INITIATIVE**

SUMMER 2007

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## **PURPOSE**

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Drug courts promote recovery through a coordinated response to participants who are dependent on alcohol and other drugs. A team approach is required, including the collaboration of judges, drug court coordinators, prosecutors, defense counsel, probation authorities, law enforcement, treatment providers, and evaluators. Drug courts employ a multi-phased treatment process. The goal of drug courts is to engage people in treatment long enough to experience the benefits of treatment in order to end the cycle of recidivism.

The Judicial Council, comprised of the leadership of the Minnesota judicial branch, has convened the multi-disciplinary, cross-branch Drug Court Initiative Advisory Committee (DCI) to oversee implementation and funding distribution for drug courts in Minnesota. The goal of the drug court initiative is to improve outcomes for alcohol and other drug (AOD) addicted individuals in the courts through justice system collaboration, thereby:

1. Enhancing public safety
2. Ensuring participant accountability; and
3. Reducing costs to society

Successful drug court initiatives will also improve the quality of life for addicted offenders, their families, and communities through recovery and lead to greater system collaboration and ongoing analysis to ensure effective and fair case outcomes.

The following document provides standards to guide the planning and implementation of drug courts in Minnesota's state trial courts. The Ten Key Components, as published by the U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, are the core structure for these standards. Definitions of each model of drug court – adult, juvenile, and DWI – can be found in Appendix A. The standards are written from the perspective of adult drug courts. Whenever there is a specific standard or practice unique to a juvenile or DWI model of drug court that standard or practice is identified in the appropriate section.

These standards were approved by the Judicial Council on July 20, 2007, and are minimum requirements for the approval and operation of drug courts in Minnesota.

Accompanying each standard are recommended practices that each drug court is encouraged to follow.

The standards are based upon almost twenty years of evaluation and lessons learned from drug courts all across the country, as well as Minnesota's oldest drug courts. While these standards seek to create a minimum level of uniform practices for drug courts there is much room for innovation and for local drug courts to tailor their programs to meet their needs.

## STANDARD I

*Drug courts must utilize a comprehensive and inclusive collaborative planning process, including:*

- 1.1 Completion of the federal Drug Court Planning Initiative (DCPI) training or the Minnesota equivalent before becoming operational.
- 1.2 Development of a written agreement setting forth the terms of collaboration among the prosecutor's office, the public defender's office, probation department, the court, law enforcement agency(ies), and county human services.
- 1.3 Creation of a steering committee comprised of key officials and policymakers to provide oversight for drug court policies and operations, including development and review of the drug court budget, and to communicate regularly with the county board and/or city council.
- 1.4 Establishment of written policies and procedures which reflect shared goals and objectives for a drug court program; at a minimum, the goals of the drug court shall be those of the DCI: enhancing public safety, ensuring participant accountability, and reducing costs to society. (An outline example for a local policies and procedures manual is found in Appendix B.)
- 1.5 Provision of written roles and responsibilities of each of the core team members. The core team members are as follows:
  - A. Judge
  - B. Drug Court Coordinator
  - C. Prosecutor
  - D. Public Defender
  - E. Probation/Case Manager
  - F. Law Enforcement Representative
  - G. Chemical Dependency Expert (Provider, Rule 25 assessor, etc.)
  - H. Tribal Representative (when appropriate)

DWI

- All of the above and a victim's representative

### **Juvenile Drug Court**

- All of the above and a school official

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## **RECOMMENDED PRACTICES**

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- ✓ Drug court teams should take a minimum of six months to plan and prepare for implementation. This amount of time allows for a cohesive team to form; one that has effectively and collaboratively reached consensus on the variety of issues inherent in the implementation of a drug court.
- ✓ When developing a written agreement, teams should include a tribal entity when appropriate.
- ✓ Other possible members of the team, may include, but are not limited to:
  - Mental Health Professional
  - Rule 25 Assessor
  - Social Service Representative<sup>1</sup>
  - Recovery Community Representatives
  - Other Community-Based Stakeholders
- ✓ All drug court teams should work with their local community members when planning, implementing, and operating a drug court program to ensure that the best interests of the community are considered. Drug court team members should engage in community outreach activities to build partnerships that will improve outcomes and support self-sustainability.
- ✓ A written sustainability plan should be developed and reviewed on an annual basis.
- ✓ A community outreach and education plan should be developed and reviewed regularly.

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<sup>1</sup> Specifically these representatives could come from public health, housing, employment, etc.

## STANDARD II

*Drug courts must incorporate a non-adversarial approach while recognizing:*

- 2.1 Retention of prosecution's distinct role in pursuing justice and protecting public safety.
- 2.2 Retention of defense counsel's distinct role in preserving the constitutional rights of drug court participants.
- 2.3 Provision of detailed materials outlining the process of the drug court to private legal counsel representing a drug court participant; counsel shall also be invited to attend post-admission drug court staffings (for their client(s) only).

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### RECOMMENDED PRACTICE

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- ✓ For consistency and stability in drug court operations, the drug court team members should be assigned to the drug court for a minimum of one year.

## STANDARD III

*Drug courts must have published eligibility and termination criteria that have been collaboratively developed, reviewed, and agreed upon by members of the drug court team, including the following elements:*

- 3.1 Offense eligibility screening based on established written criteria, which cannot be changed without the full agreement of the drug court team.
- 3.2 Only individuals with a finding of substance dependence consistent with the most current DSM (Diagnostic and Statistical Manual) diagnostic criteria shall be considered appropriate for drug court.
- 3.3 Only those individuals assessed as having a high recidivism potential are admitted into the drug court. All drug courts must use validated risk tools to assess the risk of the potential drug court candidate. Those

individuals who are assessed to be low-risk *or* medium-risk are not appropriate for drug court and shall not be admitted.

- 3.4 Participants who have a history of violent crimes, crimes to benefit a gang, or who are an integral part of a drug distribution or manufacturing network are excluded from the drug court program. If the drug court team intends to use information other than a conviction to determine whether the participant has a criminal history that would exclude the participant from participating in drug court, local drug court team members must determine as part of their written procedures what additional information may be considered by the drug court team in making a determination as to the participant's criminal history.
- 3.5 The local drug court team members must determine, in writing, what constitutes a violent or gang-related crime for purposes of disqualification from the drug court program. Other disqualifying crimes or disqualifying factors are as determined in writing by the local drug court team.

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## RECOMMENDED PRACTICES

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- ✓ Drug courts should have clear policies regarding bench warrant status as part of written termination criteria.
- ✓ Participants should not be accepted to or excluded from drug court solely on the basis of a Rule 25 assessment.
- ✓ In developing eligibility criteria drug court teams should take into consideration the following factors:
  - A process to consider the inclusion of serious and repeat (i.e., 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> degree controlled substance offense) non-violent offenders.
  - A provision to evaluate mitigating and aggravating circumstances of the current or prior offenses
  - Careful examination of the circumstances of prior juvenile adjudications and the age of the participant at the time of the offense
  - The age of prior disqualifying offenses
  - Should the mental health capacity of the individual be in question, a mental health assessment should be administered to deem the individual mentally

stable enough to participate in the drug court program. Additionally, if a co-occurring disorder exists, the drug court should be able to advocate for and access adequate services.

## STANDARD IV

*A coordinated strategy shall govern responses of the drug court team to each participant's performance and progress, and include:*

- 4.1 Regular drug court team meetings for pre-court staffings and court reviews to monitor each participant's performance.
- 4.2 Ongoing communication among the court, probation officer and/or case manager, and treatment providers, including frequent exchanges of timely and accurate information about the individual participant's overall performance.
- 4.3 Progression by participants through the drug court program based upon the individual's progress in the treatment plan and compliance with program requirements; drug court phases and an individual's progress through those phases are not to be based solely upon pre-set program timelines.
- 4.4 Responses to compliance and noncompliance (including criteria for termination) explained orally and provided in writing to drug court participants during their orientation.

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## RECOMMENDED PRACTICES

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- ✓ Having a significant number of drug court participants appear at a single session gives the opportunity to educate both the participant at the bench and those waiting as to the benefits of program compliance and consequences for noncompliance.
- ✓ Mechanisms for sharing decision-making and resolving conflicts among drug court team members should be established, emphasizing professional integrity and accountability.



## STANDARD V

*Drug courts must promptly assess individuals and refer them to the appropriate services, including the following strategies:*

- 5.1 Initial appearances before the drug court judge do not exceed:
  - 14 days after arrest, charging, or initial appearance in court for those drug courts which are pre-conviction
  - 14 days after conviction for those drug courts which are post-conviction
- 5.2 All chemical dependency and mental health assessments include collateral information to ensure the accuracy of the assessment.
- 5.3 Defense counsel must review the standard form for entry into the drug court as well as potential sanctions and incentives with the participant, informing them of their basic due process rights.
- 5.4 The standard Consent Form must be completed by all parties – team members, observers, and adjunct team members - to provide communication about confidentiality, participation/progress in treatment, and compliance with the provisions of 42 CFR, Part 2 and HIPAA (*in development*).
- 5.5 Once accepted for admission into the drug court program, the participant must participate as soon as possible in chemical dependency treatment services and be placed under supervision to monitor their compliance with program expectations.

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## RECOMMENDED PRACTICES

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- ✓ Individuals providing screening for substance use disorders and suitability for treatment should be appropriately trained.
- ✓ The drug court team should have the option to accept or reject a chemical dependency assessment without adequate collateral information.

## STANDARD VI

*A drug court must incorporate ongoing judicial interaction with each participant as an essential component of the program.*

- 6.1 At a minimum, drug court participants must appear before the drug court judge at least twice monthly during the initial phase of the program which lasts at least four months. Frequent status hearings during the initial phases of the program establish and reinforce the drug court's policies and ensure effective supervision of each drug court participant.

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### RECOMMENDED PRACTICES

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- ✓ Participants should appear before the judge weekly during the initial phase of the program which lasts at least four months. Frequent status hearings during the initial phases of the program establish and reinforce the drug court's policies and ensure effective supervision of each drug court participant.
- ✓ The drug court judge is knowledgeable about treatment methods and their limitations.
- ✓ Hearings should be before the same judge for the length of each participant's time in the drug court program.

## STANDARD VII

*Abstinence must be monitored by random, frequent, and observed alcohol and other drug testing protocols which include:*

- 7.1 Written policies and procedures for urine sample collection, sample analysis, and result reporting. The testing policies and procedures address elements that contribute to the reliability and validity of a urinalysis testing process.
- 7.2 Individualized drug testing plans; all testing must be random, frequent, and observed.

- 7.3 Plans for addressing participants who test positive at intake or who relapse must be clearly established with outlined treatment guidelines and sanctions, when appropriate, that are enforced and reinforced by the judge.
- 7.4 Notification of the court immediately when a participant tests positive, has failed to submit to testing, has submitted the sample of another, diluted the sample, or has adulterated a sample. Failure to submit to testing, submitting the sample test of another, and adulterated samples must be treated as positive tests and immediately sanctioned.
- 7.5 Testing sufficient to include each participant's primary substance of dependence, as well as a sufficient range of other common substances.

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### RECOMMENDED PRACTICE

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- ✓ When testing for alcohol, drug courts should strongly consider devices worn by the participant, instead of Portable Breath Tests (PBTs) and Saliva tests.

## STANDARD VIII

*Drug courts must provide prompt access to a continuum of approved AOD and other related treatment and rehabilitation services, particularly ongoing mental health assessments to ensure:*

- 8.1 All participants have an up-to-date treatment plan and record of activities.
- 8.2 All chemical dependency and mental health treatment services are provided by programs or persons who are appropriately licensed and trained to deliver such services according to the standards of their profession.

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### RECOMMENDED PRACTICE

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- ✓ Each participant should contribute to the cost of the treatment he/she receives while participating in the drug court, taking into account the participant's financial ability.

- ✓ Drug court teams should make reasonable efforts to observe drug court treatment programs to gain confidence in the services being provided and to better understand the treatment process.
- ✓ Whenever possible drug court treatment providers should have separate tracks for drug court participants/criminal justice clients.

## STANDARD IX

*The drug court must have a plan to provide services that are individualized to meet the needs of each participant and incorporate evidence-based strategies for the participant population. Such plans must take into consideration services that are gender-responsive and culturally appropriate and that effectively address co-occurring disorders.*

### RECOMMENDED PRACTICES

- ✓ Services should be trauma-informed<sup>2</sup> when appropriate and clinically necessary to the degree that available resources allow this.
- ✓ Ancillary services that should also be considered may include but are not limited to:
  - Education
  - Housing
  - Domestic Violence Education Programming
  - Health Related
  - Employment

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<sup>2</sup> Trauma-informed services are designed to provide appropriate interactions tailored to the special needs of trauma survivors. The focus is on screening for trauma and designing the drug court program to reduce or eliminate triggers of trauma for the survivor. This is particularly important because research shows that occurrence of trauma is a significant factor in most offender populations. This concept is further discussed in the Minnesota Supreme Court's Chemical Dependency Task Force's second report (pp. 44-47). <http://www.mncourts.gov/?page=631>

## STANDARD X

*Immediate, graduated, and individualized sanctions and incentives must govern the responses of the drug court to each participant's compliance or noncompliance.*

### RECOMMENDED PRACTICES

- ✓ Adjustment in treatment services, as well as participation in community-based mutual support meetings, should only be based upon the clinically-informed interests of the participant.
- ✓ Time between status hearings should be increased or decreased, based upon compliance with treatment protocols and progress observed.
- ✓ Responses to or incentives for compliance vary in intensity and might include:
  - Encouragement and praise from the bench;
  - Ceremonies and tokens of progress, including advancement in the program;
  - Reduced supervision;
  - Decreased frequency of court appearances;
  - Reduced fines or fees;
  - Dismissal of criminal charges or reduction in the term of probation;
  - Reduced or suspended sentence; and
  - Graduation.
- ✓ Responses to or sanctions for noncompliance vary in intensity and might include:
  - Warnings and admonishment from the bench in open court;
  - Demotion to earlier program phases;
  - Increased frequency of testing and court appearances;
  - Confinement in the courtroom or jury box;
  - Increased monitoring;
  - Fines;
  - Required community service or work programs;
  - Escalating periods of jail confinement (drug court participants remanded to jail should receive AOD treatment services while confined); and

- Termination from the program and reinstatement of regular court processing.

## STANDARD XI

*Drug courts must assure continuing interdisciplinary education of its team members to promote effective drug court planning, implementation, and ongoing operations, by:*

- 11.1 Establishing and maintaining a viable continuing education plan for drug court team members.**

### RECOMMENDED PRACTICES

- ✓ At a minimum of once every two years, drug court teams should work with outside experts to assess team functionality, review all policies and procedures, and assess the overall functionality of the program.
- ✓ Each drug court should plan for the transition of a team member and provide sufficient training for new team members.
- ✓ The operating procedures should define requirements for the continuing education of each drug court staff member.

## STANDARD XII

*Drug courts must evaluate program effectiveness by:*

- 12.1 Reporting outcome and other data as required by the DCI including information to assess compliance with the Standards.**

### RECOMMENDED PRACTICE

- ✓ (To be developed in conjunction with the Statewide Evaluation Committee.)

## ***APPENDIX A: Definition of Drug Court Models (adapted from the National Drug Court Institute)***

***Adult Drug Court*** is a specially designed court calendar, the purposes of which are to achieve a reduction in recidivism and alcohol and other drug (AOD) use among nonviolent addicted offenders and to increase the offenders' likelihood of successful habilitation through early, continuous, and intense judicially supervised treatment, mandatory periodic drug testing, community supervision and the use of appropriate sanctions and incentives. The drug court judge maintains close oversight of each case through regular status hearings with the parties involved. The judge both leads and works as a member of a team that comprises representatives from treatment, law enforcement, probation, the prosecution, and the defense.

***DWI Court*** is a distinct court program dedicated to changing the behavior of the alcohol and other drug dependant offenders arrested for Driving While Impaired (DWI). The goal of DWI court is to protect public safety by using the drug court model to address the root cause of impaired driving, alcohol and other drug problems. With the repeat offender as its primary target population, DWI courts follow the Ten Key Components of Drug Courts and Ten Guiding Principles of DWI Courts, as established by the National Association of Drug Court Professional and the National Drug Court Institute.

***Hybrid Drug Court*** is an adult drug court that also takes DWI offenders. The drug court team has had appropriate training for both models. The adult drug court program is structured to support the needs of DWI offenders, in particular the use of alcohol monitoring and the presence of victim's representatives at staffings, to protect public safety.

***Juvenile Drug Court*** is a court calendar within a juvenile court to which selected delinquency cases are referred for handling by a designated judge. The youth referred to this docket are identified as having problems with alcohol and/or other drugs. The juvenile drug court judge maintains close oversight of each case through regular status hearings with the parties involved. The judge both leads and works as a member of a team that comprises representatives from treatment, juvenile justice, social and mental health services, school and vocational training programs, law enforcement, probation, the prosecution, and the defense.

## ***APPENDIX B: Policy and Procedures Manual Outline***

### **PROGRAM OVERVIEW**

- Program Introduction
- Mission Statement
- Goals and Objectives

### **PROGRAM PLAN**

- Model
- Target Population
- Eligibility Criteria
- Referral Process
- Screening and Intake Process
- Entry Process
- Incentives & Sanctions
- Graduation Requirements
- Termination Criteria
- Staffing (frequency, team operating norms, times)
- Court Session (frequency, times)

### **ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE KEY PLAYERS OF THE OPERATIONS TEAM**

### **CONFIDENTIALITY**

### **CHEMICAL DEPENDENCY TREATMENT**

- Provider Network
- Protocols
- Phases and Duration
- Long Term Recovery Supports/Continuing Care

### **ANCILLARY SERVICES**

### **CULTURAL AWARENESS & INCLUSION POLICY**

### **PROGRAM OVERSIGHT AND SUSTAINABILITY PLAN**

- Marketing and Community Awareness
- Cross Training
- Management Information System
- Evaluation Design
- Budget

### ***APPENDICES***

- Appendix A Examples of Incentives & Sanctions



Appendix B	Forms
Appendix C	Orders
Appendix D	Participant Handbook
Appendix E	Phase Description
Appendix F	Team Meeting Ground Rules
Appendix G	Memoranda of Understanding (Enter a brief policy statement followed by necessary MOU's to maintain for the effective functioning of the program. An appendix section should contain all MOU's)
Appendix H	Life Plan Packet – this document delineates how the prospective graduate will maintain sobriety and continue law-abiding behavior.
Appendix I	Road Map – monthly review of all case plans so that all cases are prioritized on a regular basis
Appendix J	Steering Committee
Appendix K	Planning Team
Appendix L	Operations Team
Appendix M	Referral & Screening Flow Chart